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Oswald's Final Letter: How Did He Know?

WASHINGTON — Four years after the assassination of President Kennedy, the FBI is still investigating a mystery involving the contents of the last letter Lee Harvey Oswald wrote before the Dallas tragedy.

The correspondence, intercepted and read by the FBI before it arrived at its destination, was mailed to the Soviet Embassy here on November 12, 1963 — or 10 days before the assassination.

Written as a request for a Soviet visa, the letter contained a paragraph referring to the highly secret recall of a Cuban official in the Mexico City embassy days after Oswald had visited there and returned to Dallas.

The baffling question the FBI is still trying to answer is:

How did Oswald learn about this official's unannounced recall?

The FBI has concluded the information would have had to come to Oswald from one of three sources:

(1) An informant in the Cuban Embassy in Mexico City who contacted Oswald after he returned to the U.S.; (2) the Central Intelligence Agency, or (3) the KGB, the Soviet Secret police.

> Significantly, the FBI inquiry ascertained the CIA and KGB operators in Mexico City learned of the official's recall at approximately the same time and only a week before Oswald wrote his letter, containing the following paragraph: "Of course the Soviet Embassy was not at fault, they were, as I say unprepared, the Cuban Consul was guilty of a gross breach of regulations, I am glad he has since been replaced."

OSWALD'S INFORMATION

According to the FBI's findings, there was absolutely no way Oswald could have obtained this information during his September visit to Mexico City, since the secret recall orders from Havana were not transmitted until after he had returned to Dallas. Even then there was no publicity and only a handful of persons knew about the orders, one FBI report states.

During its investigation of the Kennedy assassination, the Warren Commission directed one inquiry to the CIA to determine where Oswald might have obtained the information. It produced negative results.

The CIA's memorandum to the commission, now declassified and on file in the National Archives, states:

> "We surmise that the reference in Oswald's 9 November letter to a man who has since been replaced must refer to Cuban Consul Eusebio Azque, who left Mexico for Cuba on permanent transfer on 10 November, two days before the [illegible] November. We do not know who might have told Oswald that Azque was to be replaced."

After receiving this reply from the CIA, the Warren Commission's staff made no further inquiry on the Azque reference, but centered their probe on the circumstances under which the letter was prepared and later discovered.

The commission's inquiry into the Oswald letter, most details of which were buried in the 26 volumes of testimony, revealed that Mrs. Ruth Paine, on whose typewriter the final draft was made, and Marina Oswald, knew of the letter and its contents before it was mailed.

Mrs. Paine testified Oswald typed the letter while spending the November 9 weekend at her residence with his wife. After observing the letter when Oswald was not around, Mrs. Paine said she copied it. The commission's record shows she turned the copy over to the FBI on November 23, the day after the assassination.

LETTER INTERCEPTED

An FBI report on file in the National Archives, which has been recently declassified, notes that the agency started its investigation immediately on intercepting Oswald's letter after it was mailed on November 12 in Irving, Tex.

At the time, the FBI agents involved in the intercept copied the text of the letter and put it in Oswald's Washington file with a note that one paragraph verified earlier information on Oswald's Mexico City visit.

> The note pointed out that Oswald's mention of "Comrade Kostin" in the letter confirmed a CIA report that he had met with Valerity Vladimirovich Kostikov, a member of the consular staff of the Soviet Embassy, and one of the top KGB officers in the Western Hemisphere.

Oswald's "last letter" with its reference to the Cuban Embassy official is also being investigated by New Orleans District Attorney Garrison.

Records in the National Archives here show Garrison's investigators recently combed the files for information about the Oswald letter and about how he learned of Consul Eusebio Azque's unannounced recall.

One witness, who appeared in recent weeks before Garrison's grand jury probe of the Kennedy assassination, has reported to a government agency that he was quizzed extensively about Oswald's letter. Several questions, he said, sought information designed to link Oswald with several Cubans reportedly employed by the CIA.

Senate Democratic Whip Russell Long, La., a close friend of the New Orleans district attorney, is seeking privately Garrison [illegible]